

IN choosing as their new Provost Mr. Noel Annan the Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, have assured the firm guidance of their great Foundation for, I would hazard, a long period of years.

At thirty-nine Mr. Annan is, I believe, the youngest head of a house in either University, although the Warden of St. Anthony's, Oxford, was only thirty-seven at the time of his election. As historian, biographer (his "Leslie Stephen" won the James Tait Black prize in 1951) and educationalist, he made an early and conspicuous mark.

He has had the chance of (and, unlike other brilliant young men, has declined), a flattering auxiliary career as literary journalist, broadcaster, and television pundit; it is for Cambridge that he has reserved his dazzling intelligence and as



THE NEW PROVOST

dazzling high spirits, and Cambridge, for once has known how to reward him.

For the first time for many years, moreover, the Provost's Lodgings will have a resident châtelaine; for, to the long line of silver-tongued bachelors there now succeeds a silver-tongued paterfamilias. Mr. Annan was born Gabriele Ullstein and bears, therefore, one of the great names in European publishing; after six years in

Cambridge the wheels, as I can testify, a conversational first-service as powerful as any to be found on the Centre Court of English conversation.

Earl Attlee's Joke

I CHERISH the fond—and probably vain—belief that Earl Attlee will be recognised by future generations as a considerable humourist. Unfortunately he often tramples oratorically on the fragile shells of his own best quips.

At the Pilgrims' dinner in honour of Mr. Truman, Earl Attlee was in characteristic form. "I would never dare to, criticise the American Constitution," he declared. He was obviously thinking of the storm of controversy that he roused some months ago when he did make some sharp comments on the Constitution while speaking in the House of Commons.

It was a quiet little jest, but Mr. Menzies, who spoke just before him, would have made much of a similar gambit and earned a hearty round of laughter. As it was, Earl Attlee swallowed his words, and so far as I could see not a single Pilgrim smiled. Perhaps the historians will chuckle.

General Dynamic

MR. JOHN JAY HOPKINS runs a vast American industrial combine called the General Dynamics Corporation, and this 63-year-old lawyer lives up to his company's title. He radiates energy. His shoulders bulge. His square jaw will stand comparison with Field-Marshal Slim's most prominent facial feature.

Mr. Hopkins's firm built U.S.S. Nautilus, the first atomic submarine. Another division of the corporation is constructing Atlas, the American intercontinental rocket. He hires eminent atomic scientists by the dozen.

In his spare time J. J. Hopkins

is an enthusiastic golfer who shares to the full President Eisenhower's belief that golf breeds international good will. To back this idea he has started—at a personal cost of some £15,000 a year—the Canada Cup competition which will be played at Wentworth today, tomorrow and Tuesday.

No fewer than twenty-eight countries have entered two-man teams. The Republic of China is represented by Mr. Chick Chin—who is, I think, a newcomer to international golf—and that cosmopolitan character Mr. A. N. Other. The

United States have sent those two great players, Ben Hogan and Sam Snead, as well as Mr. Hopkins himself.

The Initial Shove

I LIKE many another long-standing admirer of Professor W. H. Auden, I was fascinated to read in last week's issue of *The Sunday Times* that he began to write poetry "one Sunday afternoon in March, 1922, because a friend suggested that I should."

The identity of this friend, I thought, should be somewhere

enshrined in the history of English literature, for he had done what Coleridge's "person from Porlock" had undone—i.e., set a major poet in motion.

When, therefore, I happened to meet Professor Auden in Oxford last week, I pressed him to divulge the name. "Nothing easier," he said. "It was Robert Medley."

Mr. Medley, now one of our most distinguished painters and scene-designers, was sixteen at the time; Mr. Auden a year younger. Those with long memories will recall that Mr.

Medley later designed the scene for the Group Theatre's Auden-Isherwood productions.

Verismo Triumph

CIAN-CARLO MENOTTI was in London a few days ago to hear auditions for his latest opera "The Saint of Bleeker Street," which is to be given its first performance in this country by the B.B.C. in the early autumn.

An effective tale of sacred and profane love in the poor Italian quarter of New York, it was conducted in New York and at La Scala, Milan, by Thomas Schippers, who hopes to conduct it here and who accompanied Mr. Menotti to London. Now in his middle twenties, Mr. Schippers has survived being a child prodigy from the mazzos (where he played the organ, or half of it, like a virtuoso before his feet could touch the pedals) and remains grateful for, and wary of, the international reputation which has lately come to him. It is typical of his modest and reserved nature that, when invitations from the Met. and La Scala arrived on the same day, he answered neither but went quietly off to the cinema.

Mr. Menotti is working, he told me, on a madrigal opera commissioned by the Library of Congress.

Anti-Rabbit

SOMEONE who, in a small way, has changed the face of Western Europe is Professor Paul Armand-Delille, the French bacteriologist. By injecting two rabbits on his estate near Chartres with the original sample of myxomatosis virus, he was the prime cause of the disappearance of 97 per cent. of the wild rabbits in France, Britain, Holland, Belgium, Italy and Spain.

The Professor, now aged eighty-two, is shortly to receive a medal from the French Government for his good work. The medal bears, I hear, the dramatic image of a dead rabbit, paws in the air, beside an untouched full ear of corn.

But it doesn't do to be too sure: late reports from the Professor's property describe the reappearance of rabbits which have bred immunity to the disease and may be seen nibbling with abandon and in large numbers.

Melodious Twang

ONE of the curiosities of modern musical taste is the immense popularity of the harpsichord; and I imagine

that there will be brisk bidding for the few extra-ordinarily fine specimens which Mr. Raymond Russell has sent to Sotheby's for auction.

Mr. Russell's not-over-large house in Chelsea is known to enthusiasts all over the world for the profusion of instruments new and old which may be found there. Himself an experienced concert player, he has a stately bearing and a consular utterance (lightened, on occasion, by flashes of demoniacal humour) which have gained him entrance to even the best-guarded collections in France, Germany, Italy and elsewhere.

Within the last ten years (he is still well this side of forty) he has built up what is probably the world's most comprehensive private collection of early keyboard instruments. Next Friday's off-loading (which includes the forte-piano built for Busoni in 1900) does not, I gather, prefigure the dispersal of the collection—which may, on the contrary, be kept intact and made accessible to the public if certain negotiations, now in hand, should mature.

Full Colour

THE classic newspaper, like the classic film, is in black-and-white; and I have been waiting with apprehension for the moment at which colour-reproduction will break into the news-columns of the national dailies.

We in England are still spared this: but in Paris "L'Aurore," which plays on the extreme Right wing, now carries a daily front-page picture in "full colour." The machinery responsible for this was imported from Kiel in January of this year and tested by dead of night in the imprimerie Richelieu. No technician myself, I can only report that the results seem to me to vary between a seedman's daydream and a day-old Neapolitan ice. But it is doubtless only a matter of time before the quality becomes comparable to that of, say, a French Railway poster.

I dread the day, none the less.

Civic Jive

FUN with a capital F is not a word that I normally associate with the London County Council. Even the ebullient Mr. Khrushchev seemed to find that the atmosphere of County Hall had a sobering effect; and although I have heard an occasional guffaw in the Members' Dining Room—where the councillors sometimes take a glass of mild

claret with their lunch—merriment does not often prevail.

Now I am both gratified and startled that the L.C.C. is giving a lead to other local authorities by sponsoring a series of public jazz concerts. For the next six weeks Eric Silk and his Southern Jazz Band will dig a civic groove in parks all over London.

With a Socialist majority on the council I assume that the signature tune of this series will be that New Orleans classic "When the Saints Go Marching In," rather than that equally famous composition "High Society."

Du Côté de chez Connolly

BARBARA SKELTON, whose first novel, "A Young Girl's Touch," will be published next Friday by Weidenfeld &



BARBARA SKELTON

Nicolson, is Mrs. Connolly. She is in her middle thirties and a direct descendant of Sheridan. During the war she drove a lorry, worked in a factory and later in the Foreign Office.

In 1950 she married Cyril Connolly and has lived since then in Kent where her open Sunbeam Talbot, flashing through the meadow-sweet round a blind corner, is a familiar hazard.

She has an Abyssinian cat, is an expert cook (Provencal style) and her slim figure can often be glimpsed, lovely and elegant, meditating during the luncheon hour in some London gallery. Favourite painter: Van Gogh, favourite reading: "A Handful of Dust," "From a View to a Death" and The Odyssey.

Appointments Board

"I SUPPOSE you will soon be practising what you've learnt here," one Cambridge don said last week to a young-West African engineering student who had just completed his course.

"Why, no," came the reply. "When I get back, I think that I'll join the Cabinet."